

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions of claims in the application:

1. (canceled)
2. (canceled)
3. (canceled)
4. (canceled)
5. (canceled)
6. (currently amended) ~~The portable device as recited in Claim 1 A unitary portable biometrics-based access control device which can be directly plugged into a universal serial bus (USB) socket communicatively coupled to a restricted resource, the device comprising:~~  
a housing;  
a microprocessor housed within the housing;  
a non-volatile memory coupled to the microprocessor and capable of storing user data  
and having a minimum of 8 MB of capacity;  
a USB plug integrated into the housing without an intervening cable and capable of  
coupling the unitary portable access control device directly to the USB socket;  
and  
a biometrics-based authentication module coupled to and controlled by the  
microprocessor, at least a portion of the biometrics-based authentication module  
being housed within the housing, wherein said biometrics-based authentication

module is configured to grant access to the restricted resource provided that the biometrics-based authentication module authenticates the user's identity and wherein access to the restricted resource is denied to the user otherwise; and further wherein

said biometrics-based authentication module is configured to grant access to the user data stored in the non-volatile memory provided that the biometrics-based authentication module authenticates the user's identity and wherein access to the user data stored in the non-volatile memory is denied to the user otherwise,

wherein the microprocessor is configured to provide a bypass mechanism for authentication upon a determination of authentication failure by the biometrics-based authentication module.

7. (canceled)
8. (canceled)
9. (canceled)
10. (canceled)
11. (canceled)
12. (canceled)
13. (canceled)
14. (canceled)
15. (canceled)

16. (currently amended) ~~The biometrics based access control system as recited in Claim 11~~

A biometrics-based access control system for controlling access to a restricted resource,

comprising:

a portable device which can be directly plugged into a universal serial bus (USB) socket

communicatively coupled to the restricted resource and which includes

a housing;

a non-volatile memory housed within the housing and having a minimum of 8

MB of capacity;

a USB plug integrated into the housing without an intervening cable and capable

of coupling the portable device directly to the USB socket; and

a biometrics-based authentication module coupled to the non-volatile memory,

wherein the biometrics-based authentication module is configured to (1) capture a first

biometrics marker, (2) store the first biometrics marker in the non-volatile

memory; (3) capture a second biometrics marker; and (4) determine whether the

second biometrics marker can be authenticated against the first biometrics marker,

and wherein access to the restricted resource is granted upon a determination of

successful authentication and wherein access to the restricted resource is denied

otherwise,

wherein a bypass mechanism for authentication is provided upon a determination of

authentication failure by the biometrics-based authentication module.

17. (canceled)

18. (canceled)

19. (canceled)

20. (canceled)

21. (currently amended) ~~The biometrics-based access control method as recited in Claim 17~~

A biometrics-based access control method for controlling access to a restricted resource  
and implemented using a portable device, the method comprising the steps of:

- (a) directly plugging the portable device into a universal serial bus (USB) socket  
communicatively coupled to the restricted resource, wherein the portable device  
includes a housing; a memory having a minimum of 8 MB of capacity; a  
biometrics sensor; and a USB plug integrated into the housing without an  
intervening cable and capable of coupling the portable device directly to the USB  
socket;
- (b) obtaining a first biometrics marker from a user with the biometrics sensor of the  
portable device;
- (c) retrieving a registered biometrics marker from the memory of the portable device,  
the registered biometrics marker having been stored therein during a registration  
process;
- (d) comparing the first biometrics marker against the registered biometrics marker;  
and
- (e) granting the user access to the restricted resource provided that a match is  
identified in said step (d), and  
further comprising the step of providing the user with a bypass authentication procedure  
provided that a match is not identified in said step (d).

22. (canceled)

23. (canceled)

24. (canceled)

25. (canceled)

26. (canceled)

27. (canceled)